

Army takes STEM recruiting on the road

October 27, 2011

By **Mr. Dan Lafontaine (RDECOM)**

ABERDEEN PROVING GROUND, Md. -- About 500 Maryland students will soon get the first look at the U.S. Army's new STEM effort to recruit civilian scientists and engineers.

The Army is rolling out its Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics Asset Vehicle, a recruiting vehicle designed to attract and engage aspiring young scientists.

Elkton, Dundalk and Joppatowne high schools and Perryville, Holabrid, Parkville and Sligo middle schools will begin beta testing the vehicle Nov. 14, said Louie Lopez, STEM outreach coordinator for the U.S. Army Research, Development and Engineering Command.

Seventy to 80 students per school will participate. The testing coincides with American Education Week, Nov. 14 to 18.

A team of computer scientists, graphic artists, animators, carpenters and electricians at the U.S. Army Edgewood Chemical Biological Center is leading the transformation of the tractor-trailer into the STEM Asset Vehicle.

Equipped with high-definition TVs and touchscreen computers, the vehicle is a hands-on mobile showcase of Army technological capabilities for middle-school, high-school and college students.

Teams of Army recruiters and subject matter experts will drive the vehicle across the United States to STEM education outreach events. The recruiters will wear futuristic-looking mock body armor designed, tested and built by ECBC's Advanced Design and Manufacturing unit, said Greg Thompson, industrial designer/concept artist with ECBC's Conceptual Modeling and Animation Team.

ECBC's team worked with Legacy Effects, a California special-effects company that has worked on movies such as "Iron Man," "Avatar" and "Real Steel," to create the recruiters' body suits. ECBC uses water clear urethane plastic, carbon fiber, fiberglass and urethane expandable foam to manufacture the suits, said Brad Ruprecht, engineering technician/senior model maker.

The Army will officially unveil the vehicle Jan. 6 during All-American Bowl Week, a national high-school

football all-star game scheduled for Jan. 7, in San Antonio. The Army demonstrates its latest technological advancements in the Army Technology Zone, before the annual game.